PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 21, 1989

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TOPFREE EQUALITY PICNIC

Rochester, New York.

The fourth annual topfree equality picnic will be held Saturday, June 24. The purpose of the event is to call attention to the fact that there still exists in New York State a law which requires women to wear more clothing than men. The law requires women but not men to cover their chests in public. Women who see Statute 245.01 as unconstitutional are refusing to abide by it;they are supported, also, by a number of men who see the injustice of this male privilege. Seven women were arrested at the first picnic in 1986, but were acquitted on the grounds of "free speech", after a trial and much national publicity. The grounds of acquittal, say the defendants, has little to do with the basis of protest: the inequality of the law. The district attorney has announced plans to appeal, but there has been no other evidence of this happening. Police have ignored the topfree picnics since the first year.

Fifty years ago, men were arrested in Boston, New York, California, and elsewhere for going topfree. Women all over the country are now refusing this dictation of dress code for similar reasons -- comfort, pragmatism, freedom of choice, etc. But women face the additional burdens of discrimination and harassment.

Because of the present denial of equal protection under the law, the women are concerned with the consequent damage to women's and girl's self-concepts and to physical and mental health. They feel that exceptions to equality for biological reasons, be it race or gender, are harmful not only to them but to our entire

culture and system of law.

The women and male supporters have appeared on radio and television programs, have talked with legislators, written and distributed literature, and continue to organize educational forums on this and related topics. A spokesperson for the Coalition for Topfree Equality, the organization sponsoring this event, has been informed that two writers from The New Yorker will be present at the picnic on Saturday.

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